

A Study of Sanitation Problems in Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana

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Abstract

Sufficient drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene are all indispensable requirements to ensure human health. Improving upon these services will bring economic advances while also helping to build resilience given increasing climate variability. The objective of this research paper was to study sanitation problems in Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The study using secondary sources available including newspapers reports, talks with experts, academic papers and documents confirmed that waste management is a major challenge in the Metropolis and there is the need to improving Decentralised Environmental Sanitation Governance in the Kumasi Metropolis. The study concluded that poor sanitation is a major issue undermining and impeding the socio-economic and political development of the people of Kumasi Metropolis and sanitation promotion or behaviour change is necessary for success in accomplishing safe sanitation. The study recommended the need to build on the grass roots, local government councils and development committees to plan and maintain their own sanitation improvement activities and promote individuals action for change with the support of technocrats from all sectors including health, education and community development.

Keywords: Sanitation, Hygiene, waste management, public health, environment

1.1 Introduction

The term “sanitation” comprises all interventions which aim to protect and promote human health by providing a clean environment and breaking the cycle of disease. It refers to the principles and practices relating to the collection, treatment, removal or disposal of human excreta, household wastewater and refuse as they impact upon people and the environment. In order to be sustainable a sanitation system has to be not only economically viable, socially acceptable, and technically and institutionally appropriate, it should also protect the environment and the natural resources (Lane, 2008). Sanitation is the collection, transport, treatment and disposal or reuse of human excreta, domestic wastewater and solid waste, and associated hygiene promotion (IYS, 2008).

Good sanitation is extensively admitted to be a critical underpinning for better health, welfare and economic productivity, but effort in decreasing the encumbrance of sanitation related diseases borne by poor people in developing countries remains slow and is holding back advancement on all other development outcomes.

Sanitation is an imperative developmental issue that influences on 2.5 billion people (app. 38% of the global population) people globally and 62% of the population in Africa lacking access to improved sanitation facilities. Half of the people living in developing countries do not have access to even a basic toilet (WHO/UNICEF, 2010). It is projected that more than 35% of municipal budgets besides periodic support from the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF), the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) sources, and other specific- project interventions by Development Partners is spent on sanitation improvement with very limited impact. As in numerous developing countries, Ghana suffers from sanitation problems with substantial negative impact on national development (IESS, 2016).

Sanitation is firstly about human behaviour; and to be successful, systems need to prioritise such things as affordability, comfort, dignity, privacy, odour control, ease of cleaning and user acceptance by men, women, elderly and children. To be sustainable, sanitation systems must build in all these aspects. Poor sanitation which has always been associated with Ghana, has significant negative effects on the national economy and that numerous reported sickness and injuries in Ghana is related to poor sanitation.

Lack of adequate sanitation is a major threat to the environment which includes the degradation of the urban environment by the indiscriminate disposal of solid and liquid waste and the pollution of fresh water and lakes by untreated human waste, the result being smaller, contaminated fish catches. The impact of poor environmental sanitation is seen all around the country; unsightly littering, foul-smelling excreta-laden and choked gutters, stagnant pools of water and flooding during rains, vermin and rodents on mounds of refuse dumps, and the attendant prevalence of malaria, cholera, diarrhoea and typhoid in all communities (IESS, 2016).

In line with governments efforts toward sanitation enhancement, the National Environmental Sanitation Strategy and Action Plan identifies (NESSAP), identifies 7 focus areas necessary to drive forward efforts for achieving good sanitation. These are Capacity Development - Information, Education and Communication, Legislation and Regulation, Levels of Service, Sustainable Financing and Cost Recovery, Research and Development, Monitoring and Evaluation. In accordance with GPRSII (2006 - 2009) as well as the current Medium-Term Development Policy Framework (MTDPF, 2010 – 2013), Environmental sanitation is considered as a major component of the Human Resource pillar for improving quality of life. (IESS, 2016).

Good sanitation is very essential for the survival of humanity; the provision of treated water to the inhabitants of the city is a civic responsibility of the city administration. The presence of good sanitation is crucial for good health and the elimination of some water borne diseases in the Kumasi Metropolis. Kumasi is located in the transitional forest zone and is about 270km north of the national capital, Accra. It is between latitude 6.35° – 6.40° and longitude 1.30° – 1.35°, an elevation which ranges between 250 – 300 metres above sea level with an area of about 254 square kilometres. The unique centrality of the city as a traversing point from all parts of the country makes it a special place for many to migrate to.

1.2 Underlying causes of Poor Sanitation

- Nonexistence of technical capability to orientate and upkeep the District Assemblies in the delivery of environmental sanitation facilities.
- Efforts to assign to the Local Government with environmental sanitation purposes execute by ministries and central government agencies, without relocating the associated resources, employees and apparatus.
- Wretched and ill enforced environmental sanitation legislation.
- Insufficient provision of resources for environmental sanitation services, together at state and at area level.
- Poor dwellers' attitude towards sanitation.
- At the household level, poor hygienic practices by individuals and communities are compounded by insufficient and ineffective hygiene education.
- Nonexistence of a vibrant national goal or vision of environmental sanitation as an essential social service and a major determinant of the standard of living.
- Absence of an officially constituted environmental sanitation sub-sector in the governmental system of sector development planning.
- Lack of a comprehensive policy assigning responsibilities for environmental sanitation to the relevant Ministries and agencies, resulting in overlaps, gaps and poor synchronization in the management of programmes and services.

1.3 Explicit Sanitation Problems Confronting Kumasi Metropolis

- Open defecating everywhere particularly residential spaces, beaches, bushes, gutters and road side.
- The discharge of untreated waste into water systems is one of the utmost intolerable sanitation problems.
- Insufficient toilet amenities for both household and the broad-spectrum public as a whole.
- Laughable and insufficient access to clean drinking water and occasionally scarcity of water.
- Overflowing waste everywhere and burning of trash discriminately is additional sanitation problem facing Ghana.
- Refuse and rubbish are also seen congregated in positions of urban towns and shops left at the misfortune of the environment.
- Vector-borne illnesses such as Malaria, Cholera, Typhoid, Dysentery among others are ubiquitous owing to the fundamental nonexistence of pest and disease vector' control programmes.
- Contamination of water bodies upsurgs the practical struggle and cost of offering water supplies.
- Moreover, the spectacle and odour of ineffectually managed wastes establish a key uneasiness to residents and people to Ghana.

1.4 Effect of Poor Sanitation

- Nonexistence of adequate sanitation is a key threat to the environment which comprises the degradation of the urban environment by the uncritical disposal of solid and liquid waste and the pollution of water bodies.
- Diseases attributable to poor sanitation currently kill more children globally than AIDS, malaria and measles put together, and diarrhea is the single biggest killer of children in Africa (Black, et al, 2010). This presents a major risk to public health.
- The effect of poor sanitation affects the tourism industry. Ghana loses 420 million Ghana cedis yearly due to poor sanitation, according to a desk study carried out by the Water and Sanitation Programme of the World Bank in 2010 (www.ghanaweb.com).
- Increased procurement costs for chemical and mechanical clean-up operations.
- The issue of poor sanitation is one of the special conditions which prevent girls from fuller participation and achievement in schools and to an extent force them out of school (BBC, 2016).
- Diarrhoea is the biggest child killer in Africa and 88% of those deaths can be attributed to poor sanitation (BBC, 2016)

- Without proper sanitation we can not achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, empower women and reduce child mortality.
- Without good sanitation, the world effort of eradicating extreme poverty will be a mirage.
- The tremendous impact of sanitation on health results in significant economic returns on investment in sanitation, for individuals as well as national economies (Evans, Hutton & Huller, 2004).
- Decrease productive days gain obtained within a year including low school attendance for children
- High death rate thereby affecting the human resource based of the country (WHO, 2008).
- Fresh water and lakes by untreated human waste, the result being smaller, contaminated fish catches.

1.5 Conclusion

From the study findings, it can be concluded that poor sanitation is a major issue undermining and impeding the socio-economic and political development of the people of Kumasi Metropolis and sanitation promotion or behaviour change is necessary for success in accomplishing safe sanitation. Therefore, it is very imperative for each and every one particularly the government and the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly to come together to fashion out effective policies to tackle this social canker in order to holistic development.

1.6 Recommended Methods to Deal with Sanitation problems in Kumasi Metropolis

Below are the recommended ways to deal with poor sanitation effectively and efficiently in Kumasi Metropolis.

- We need to build on the grass roots, local government councils and development committees to plan and maintain their own sanitation improvement activities and promote individuals action for change with the support of technocrats from all sectors including health, education and community development.
- In rural areas, more emphasis may have to be placed on deserving positive image for promotion sanitation within the context of the local traditions and beliefs. At the same time specific efforts will be made to discourage negative taboos and beliefs.
- In urban centres, pressure may need to be exerted on landlords and service providers to comply with minimum service standards in the Kumasi Metropolis.
- Against this background, and in recognition of its importance to national development, better stress must be positioned on environmental sanitation in the sharing of national development resources.
- Environmental sanitation policy must seek to outline a methodical and orderly attitude and framework within which those resources can be used most competently.
- Government must endure to offer and increase people's access to hygienic water and community toilet facilities.
- Tenant should be billed to pay for sanitation services to help discharge government's encumbrances.
- Businesses generating solid and wastes products and by-products should be charged deliberately for cultivating sanitation services.
- There must be an unequivocal and strict framework for punitive and incentive measures to encourage acceptable behavioural practices and deject unhealthy lifestyles. This implies all laws dealing with the environment need to be imposed.
- There is the prerequisite for the institution of recycling of waste materials from public and private sector partnership.
- Establishments authorized to check sanitation difficulties need to be effective and the government must give them the required means to discharge their duties very well.
- Families and homes must obey and fulfill the laws on sanitation predominantly attaining toilet facilities in their countless homes.
- There must be deliberate inclusion of youth in all decision-making processes in developing, reviewing, planning and/or implementation of Strategies and Action Plans.
- Environmental policy mainly focuses on the strategic elements under seven these areas namely: capacity development, information, education and communication, legislation and regulation, levels of service, sustainable financing and cost recovery, research and development monitoring and evaluation.
- Against this background, and in recognition of its importance to national development, greater emphasis must be placed on environmental sanitation in the allocation of national development resources.
- Environmental sanitation policy must seek to define a systematic approach and framework within which those resources can be used most efficiently.
- Government must continue to provide and expand people's access to clean water and public toilet.
- Resident should be billed to pay for sanitation services to help relieve government's burdens.
- Companies producing solid and wastes products and by-products should be levied purposely for

improving sanitation services.

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